

STATE OF MARYLAND

MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Shari T. Wilson, Secretary

BILL NO: HB 787

COMMITTEE: Budget and Taxation

POSITION: Support

TITLE: Emergency Responders – Death Benefits and Funeral Expenses

BILL ANALYSIS:

This bill expands Public Safety Article §1-202 to allow Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) Hazardous Material Response Team Employees to be eligible for the public safety death benefit and funeral expenses. The expansion of the public safety death benefit would be limited to MDE's six hazardous material emergency response officers and one division chief.

POSITION AND RATIONALE: Support

This legislation is necessary to provide MDE Hazardous Material Response Team Employees the same death benefit that other public safety rescue squads and law enforcement officers, with whom MDE employees serve side-by-side, qualify for, in the event of a death in the performance of their duties. These MDE employees respond to emergency situations involving hazardous material releases and/or oil discharges along with law enforcement, fire fighters, and rescue squad members. The members of MDE's Hazardous Material Response Team undertake the same risk and deserve the same benefits as those with whom they work alongside.

Fortunately, MDE's emergency response team has an outstanding safety record and no employee has ever died in the line of duty. Despite this statistic, the nature of the work routinely places the emergency response team in harm's way. These employees respond to roughly 700 incidents per year. Examples of incident responses include: drilling and off-loading an overturned gasoline tanker along the highway, securing a hazardous

material release from a derailed train, and operating at the scene of an explosion at a chemical plant.

The Department's revenues would not be affected by this legislation. The bill would require a set aside by the Department of \$125,000 for the death benefit, along with an additional \$10,000 for reasonable funeral expenses. The funds would be set aside from two of MDE's special funds: the Oil Disaster Containment, Clean-Up and Contingency Fund and the Hazardous Substance Control Fund. There will be no further affect on the Department's finances unless there is a line of duty death of one of the seven MDE employees covered by this legislation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
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